

Where dwellen ye, if it to telle be?
In the suburbes of a toun, quod he,
Lurkyng in hernes and in lanes blynde,
Wheras thise robbours and thise
thieves by kynde,
Holden hir pryvee fereful residence,
As they that dar not shewen hir presence,
So faren we, if I shall seye the sothe.

Now, quod oure hoost, yit lat me talke to
the;
Why artow so discoloured of thy face?
Peter! quod he, God yeve it harde grace,
I am so used in the fyr to blowe,
That it hath chaunged my colour, I trowe.
I am nat wont in no mirour to prye,
But swynke soore, and lerne multiplie.
We blondren evere, and pouren in the fir,
And for al that we faille of our desir,
for evere we lakken oure conclusioun.
To muchel folk we doon illusioun,
And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,
Or ten, or twelve, or manye sommes mo,
And make hem wenen, at the leeste weye,
That of a pound we koude make tweye!
Yet is it fals; but ay we han good hope
It for to doon, and after it we grope.
But that science is so fer us biforn,
We mowen nat, although we hadde it sworn,
It overtake, it slit away so faste;
It wol us maken beggers atte laste.

W^HIL this yeman was thus in his
talkyng,
This chanoun drough hym
neer, and herde al thyng
Which this yeman spak, for
suspicioun
Of mennes speche evere hadde this chanoun.
for Catoun seith, that he that gilti is

HEERE BIGYNNETH THE CHANOUNS YEMAN HIS TALE.

Prima pars.

W^HIL this chanoun I
dwelt have seven yer,
And of his science am
I never the neer.
Al that I hadde I have
ylost therby;
And, God woot, so
hath many mo than I.
Ther I was wont to be
right fressh and gay
Of clothyng and of oother good array,
Now may I were an hose upon myn heed;
And wher my colour was bothe fressh & reed,
Now is it wan and of a leden hewe;
Whoso it useth, soore shal he rewe.
And of my swynk yet blered is myn eye;
Lo! which advantage is to multiplie!
That slidynge science hath me maad so bare,
That I have no good, wher that evere I fare;
And yet I am endetted so therby,

Demeth alle thyng be spoke of hym, ywis,
That was the cause he gan so ny hym drawe
To his yeman, to herkennen al his sawe.
And thus he seyde unto his yeman tho:
W^HOLDO thou thy pees, and spek no
wordes mo!

Thou sclaudrest me heere in this com-
paignye,
And eek discoverest that thou sholdest
hyde.

Ye? quod our hoost, telle on, what so
bityde;

Of al his thretyng rekke nat a myte!

In feith, quod he, namoore I do but lyte.

ND whan this chanoun saugh it wolde
nat be,

But his yeman wolde telle his pryvetee.

He fledde away for verray sorwe and shame.

Al quod the yeman, heere shal arise game.

Al that I kan anon now wol I telle,

Syn he is goon, the foule feend hym quelle!

for nevere heerafter wol I with hym meete
for peny ne for pound, I yow biheete!

He that me broghte first unto that game,
Er that he dye, sorwe have he and shame!

for it is ernest to me, by my feith;
That feece I wel, whatso any man seith;

And yet, for al my smert, and al my grief,
for al my sorwe, labour, and meschief,

I koude nevere leve it in no wise.
Now wolde God, my wit myghte suffise

To tellen al that longeth to that art!

And nathelees yow wol I tellen part;

Syn that my lord is goon, I wol nat spare;

Swich thyng as that I knowe, I wol declare.

Heere endeth the prologe of the Chanouns
Yemannes Tale.

Of gold that I have borwed, trewely,
That whil I lyve, I shal it quite nevere.

Lat every man be war by me for evere!

What maner man that casteth hym therto,
If he continue, I holde his thrist ydo.

So help me God, therby shal he nat wynne,
But empte his purs, and make his wittes
thyne.

And whan he, thurgh his madnesse and
folye

Hath lost his owene good thurgh jupartye,
Thanne he exciteth oother folk therto,
To lese hir good as he hymself hath do.

for unto shrewes joye it is and ese
To have hir felawes in payne and disese,
Thus was I ones termed of a clerh.

Of that no charge, I wol speke of oure werh.

Whan we been there as we shul exercise
Oure elvysshe craft, we semen wonder wise,

Oure termes been so clerghial and so queynre.

I blowe the fir til that myn herte feynre.

W^HAT sholde I tellen eche proporcioun
Of thynges whiche that we werche upon,
As on fyve or sixe ounces, may wel be,
Of silver or som oother quantite,

And bisye me to telle yow the names
Of orpyment, brent bones, iren squames,

That into poudre grounden been ful smal?

And in an erthen pot how put is al,
And salt yput in, and also papeer,

Biforn thise poudres that I speke of heer,
And wel ycovered with a lampe of glas;

And muchel oother thyng which that ther was?

And of the pot and glasses enlutyng,
That of the eyre myghte passe out nothyng,

And of the esy fir and smart also,
Which that was maad, and of the care and wo

That we hadde in oure matires sublymyng,
That we hadde in oure matires sublymyng

And in amalgamyng and calenyng
Of quyksilver, yclept mercurie crude?

for alle our sleightes we kan nat conclude.

Oure orpyment and sublymed mercurie,
Oure grounden litarge eek on the porfurie,

And ech of thise of ounces a certeyn,
Nicht helpeth us, oure labour is in veyn.

Ne eek oure spirites ascencioun,
Ne oure matires that lyen al fix adoun,

Nowe in oure werkynge nothyng us availle.

for lost is al oure labour and travaille,
And al the cost, a twenty devel way,

Is lost also, which we upon it lay.

HER is also ful many another thyng
That is unto oure craft apertenyn;

Though I by ordre hem nat reherce kan,
Bycause that I am a lewed man;

Yet wol I telle hem as they come to mynde,
Thogh I ne kan nat sette hem in hir kynde;

As boole armonyak, vertgrees, boras,
And sondry vessels maad of erthe and glas,

Oure urnyales, and our descensories,
Violes, croslets, and sublymatories,

Cucurbites, and alambikes eek,
And othere swiche, deere ynough a leek.

Nat nedeth it for to reherce hem alle,
Matres rubifyng, and boles galle,

Arsenyk, sal armonyak, and brymstoon;

And herbes koude I telle eek many oon,
As egremoyne, valerian, and lunarie,

And othere swiche, if that me liste tarie.

Oure lampes brennyng bothe nyght and day,
To bryng aboute oure purpos if we may;

Oure fourneys eek of calcinacioun,
And of watres albificacioun,

Unsekked lym, chalk, and gleyre of an ey,
Poudres diverse, assches, donge, pisse, and cley,

Cered pokets, sal peter, vitriole,
And diverse fires maad of wode and cole;

Sal tartre, alkaly, and sal preparat,
And combust matires, and coagulat,

Cley maad with hors or mannes heer, and oille
Of tartre, alum, glas, berme, wort, and argoille,

Resalgar, and oure matires enbibyng;

And eek of oure matires encorporyng,
And of oure silver citrinacioun,

Oure cementyng and fermentacioun,
Oure yngottes, testes, and many mo.

W^HOL yow telle, as was me taught also,
The foure spirites and the bodies sevene,

By ordre, as ofte I herde my lord hem
nevene.

The firste spirit quyksilver called is,
The seconde orpyment, the thridde, ywis,

Sal armonyak, and the ferthe brymstoon;

The bodies sevene eek, lo! hem heere anon:

Sol gold is, and Luna silver we threpe,
Mars iren, Mercurie quyksilver we clepe,

Saturnus leed, and Juppiter is tyn,
And Venus coper, by my fader kyn!

This cursed craft whoso wole exercise,
He shal no good han that hym may suffise;

for al the good he spendeth therabout,

He lese shal, therof have I no doute.

Whoso that listeth outhen his folie,
Lat hym come forth, and lerne multiplie;

And every man that oght bath in his cofre,
Lat hym appiere, and were a philosophre.

Ascaunce that craft is so light to leere?

Nay, nay, God woot, al be he monk or frere,
Preest or chanoun, or any oother wyght,

Though he sitte at his book bothe day and night
In lernyng of this elvysshe nyce loore,

Al is in veyn, and parde, muchel moore!

To lerne a lewed man this subtiltee,
fy! spek nat therof, for it wol nat bee;

And konne he letterure, or konne he noon,
As in effect, he shal fynde it al oon.

for bothe two, by my savacioun,
Concluden, in multiplicacioun,

Ylike wel, whan they han al ydo;

This is to seyn, they failen bothe two.

ET forgat I to maken rehersaille
Of watres corosif, and of lymaille,

And of bodies mollificacioun,
And also of hire induracioun,

Oilles, ablucions, and metal fusible,
To tellen al wolde passen any bible

That owher is; wherfore, as for the beste,
Of alle thise names now wol I me reste.

for as I trowe, I have yow toold ynowe
To reyse a feend, al looke he never so rowe.

Al! nay! lat be; the philosophres stoon,
Elixir clept, we sechen faste echoon,

for hadde we hym, thanne were it siker ynow.

But, unto God of hevene I make avow,
for al oure craft, whan we han al ydo,

With al oure sleighte, he wol nat come us to.

He hath ymaad us spenden muchel good,
for sorwe of which almoost we wexen wood,

But that good hope crepeth in oure herte,
Supposyng ever, though we sore smerte,

To be releved by hym afterward.

Swich supposyng and hope is sharpe and hard;

I warne yow wel it is to seken evere;

That futur temps hath maad men to dissevere,
In trust therof, from al that evere they hadde.

Yet of that art they kan nat wexen sadde,
for unto hem it is a bitter sweete;

The
Chanouns
Yemannes
Tale